


County authority bill finished

Would have interfered with commissioners' duties, says committee

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The statehouse killed a bill that would have given local legislators a say on county hires after a committee report said the measure would infringe on the county commissioners' authority.

 **Claremont** State Rep. Larry Converse, D-Claremont, handed the bill off to the Municipal and County Government Committee last month in the hopes of requiring the commissioners to seek approval from the county delegation

before hiring "any person for a management or superintendent position."

But after County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio, County Commissioner Ben Nelson and state Rep. Beverly Rodeschin, R-Newport, testified against the proposal — and only Converse spoke for it — the bipartisan committee voted 14-0 to recommend the full House designate the bill inexpedient to legislate.

"The committee feels that passing this bill would be interfering with the duties of the county commissioners to manage their county affairs," state Rep. Eric Stohl of Colebrook wrote in the committee report.

On Thursday, the House agreed, adjoining to the measure the ITL status that effectively terminates the bill.

Converse said the measure was intended to give the delegation more control over the top job at the county nursing home, where he said the passing of leadership between several interim and two permanent administrators over the last two years had created "turmoil" at the facility.

"Someone wasn't doing something wrong," Converse said Thursday.

But Gil de Rubio, Nelson and Rodeschin disagreed, saying the measure only would

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throw a wrench in a system that was working fine.

"I think the bill was an attempt for Mr. Converse to have the delegation micromanage," Gil de Rubio said Thursday.

In addition, he objected to the way Converse handled the bill, putting in a legislative service request concerning the nursing home in December but refusing to talk about it until the bill was printed more than a month and a half later.

"He had the legal right to do it, but we operate by an open system of government ... it was a slap in the face of democracy," he said.

But Converse had his own gripe about the way the legislation was approached. He said that at the public hearing it was pointed out that his wife Janice used to work at the home, which Converse said changed the way the committee viewed the bill.

"They thought it was a witch hunt instead of what it was intended to be," he said.

Still, Converse said he is not likely to revive the measure if re-elected in 2008, the next year he could introduce it again.

"That's life: you can't win them all," he said.